

AN ICONOGRAPHICAL SURVEY OF HINDU DEITIES OF NEPAL

The picturesque valley of Nepal situated in the lap of the mighty Himālayas between the borders of India and Tibet is full of sculptures of Hindu deities. The earliest sculptures of Nepal are all Brāhmanical, dating back to the 5th-6th century A.D.¹ The rich variety of image-types includes Viṣṇu in his various incarnations, Śiva in his different forms, Śakti in her numerous manifestations, Sūrya, Brahmā, Gaṇeśa, Kārttikeya, Hanumān, Indra, Kāmadeva, Ardhanārīśvara, etc., which show the feeling of religious tolerance amongst the followers of different sects. It will be interesting to note that like India in Nepal also Buddha was regarded as one of the incarnations of Viṣṇu. The Rādhākṛṣṇa temple at Patan, datable to the 17th century A.D., is adorned with the beautiful sculptures of the ten incarnations of Viṣṇu, namely, Matsya, Kūrma, Varāha, Nṛsiṃha, Vāmana, Paraśurāma, Balarāma, Buddha and Kalki. We will now briefly describe some important images of various Hindu deities in the following pages.

Vāmana-Trivikrama

Viṣṇu in his various incarnations and forms was worshipped in Nepal from very early times. The Purāṇic stories associated with Viṣṇu appear to have travelled from India to Nepal in the early centuries of the Christian era². One of the finest images of Viṣṇu dated in 389 L.S. (467 A.D.) shows him in his Trivikrama incarnation. This in Viṣṇu's fifth incarnation and its story is repeatedly mentioned in several *Purāṇas* and other ancient Sanskrit works. The image found at Paśupati shows

* B. N. SHARMA, Keeper, National Museum, New Delhi (India).

1. H. GOETZ, *Early Indian Sculptures from Nepal*, in AA, XVIII, I (1955), pp. 61-74 and figs.

2. B. N. SHARMA, *Viṣṇu-Trivikrama in Literature, Art and Epigraphs*, in EW, 18, 3-4 (Sept.-Dec. 1968), pp. 329 ff. and figs.

the multi-armed Trivikrama taking decisive step to measure the three worlds³. His right leg is firmly planted on the ground and the left is raised above the shoulders. The whole myth of Bali and Vāmana is beautifully narrated below the uplifted leg of the deity⁴.

A slightly late image of Trivikrama (476 A.D.), discovered at Lajampat is exhibited in the National Museum, Kathmandu (fig. 1). The right leg of the deity is held in reverence by Nāgarāja and the left foot touches the mouth of Rāhu. Below the raised leg of Trivikrama, king Bali with his queen Vindhyavatī is shown pouring the sacred water on the hands of Viṣṇu in guise of a Brahmachārī and behind the royal couple, the sacrificial horse is depicted. Dr. Stella Kramrisch has dated this excellent sculpture to 476 A.D.⁵. Contemporary sculptures of Trivikrama in Indian art can be seen in the Archaeological Museums at Mathura and Gwalior.

An excellently carved image of Trivikrama at Changunarayana is datable to the 9th century A.D.⁶. In this sculpture, the mighty god holding various attributes, is represented as a pillar of victory traversing the universe with his out-stretched left leg. Thus, it recalls to our mind the famous rock-cut image of the god at Mahabalipuram⁷.

An unique image of Trivikrama, datable to late 17th century A.D. is found at Sankhu. He holds a lotus, a disc, a mace and a conch in his four hands. In this sculpture, the god has three legs. His left leg is placed on a double lotus, the right is reverentially held by Bali and the middle leg is raised high up in the sky. It probably represents the Vedic idea *-tredhā nidadhe padam*. No such image has so far been published from India.

Varāha

Varāha is also one of the most important incarnations of Viṣṇu. The details about Varāha, his iconography and centres of worship are vividly described in the *Varāha Purāṇa*⁸. Some chapters of this *Purāṇa* are also said to have been added by an inhabitant of Nepal, who was well-versed in Indian mythology and religion.

The brick temple at Dhum, Visala Nagara, contains a colossal image of Varaha lifting Bhū-devī on his left hand. Nāgarāja is supporting his left foot, while right foot is placed on the coils of the great serpent. The image datable to 7th century A.D., is still worshipped by the local people.

3. Cf. S. LEVI, *Lé Nepal*, II, Paris, 1905, p. 101.

4. B. N. SHARMA, *Vāmana in Literature and Art*, in *Purāṇa*, XII, I (Jan. 1970), pp. 54-64 and pls.

5. S. KRAMRISCH, *The Art of Nepal*, New York, 1964, pl. II.

6. *Indian Archaeology - 1963-64, A Review*, p. 100, pl. LIV.

7. K. R. SRINIVASAN, *Cave Temples of the Pallavas*, New Delhi, 1964, p. 147, pl. XLIV.

8. R. C. HAZRA, *The Varāha Purāṇa*, in *ABORI*, 18, 1-4 (1937), pp. 323 f.

The Sundari Chowk at Patan has a sculpture of Varāha with Śakti. The six-headed deity is seated in *sukhāsana* on a lying nude human figure. He is eight-armed and holds in his right hands a noose, a drum, an arrow, and a mace or a staff; the left hands carry a lotus, bow, noose; while his front left hand is placed on the left shoulder of his consort. The right hand of Śakti is around the neck of her consort and the left is placed on her left knee. They are decked in the usual jewellery of the period.

Nṛsiṃha

The *Nṛsiṃha Purāṇa* begins with a salutation to Nṛsiṃha, the fourth incarnation of Viṣṇu. An excellently carved image of Nṛsiṃha is found at Changunarayana. The god is tearing the entrails of the demon Hiraṇyakaśipu lying on his lap. The wrath of the god can very well be marked on his face. Indra and other *devas* flank him on either side. And Nāgarāja under the canopy of snake-hoods is seen below the feet of the god. The image showing power and dynamism, can be dated to the 13th century A.D.⁹

Kṛṣṇa

Kṛṣṇa is regarded as an incarnation of Viṣṇu. Various episodes from Kṛṣṇa's life have been mentioned in several *Purāṇas* and particularly in the *Harivaṃśa* and the *Bhāgavata*. Scenes from Kṛṣṇa's life are found carved at several places in Nepal. Among these, Kṛṣṇa subjugating the serpent Kāliya appears to have been a quite favourite subject among the ancient Newārī artists. A wonderfully carved sculpture belonging to c. 7th century and deposited in the old palace at Kathmandu depicts child Kṛṣṇa vanquishing the Nāga by placing his right foot on the right arm of the great serpent and the left on his crowned head. Kṛṣṇa's right hand is raised high and the left holds one of his hoods. But in spite of the great fury, eternal peace and happiness can be marked on his face. Another equally interesting image exists in the Kumbheśvara temple at Patan.

The Indreśvara Mahādeva temple at Panauti (16th century) shows Kṛṣṇa with Gopīs. The four-armed deity stands in the centre holding a disc and a mace in his upper hands, and is playing on the flute held in the lower ones. On his either side stands a Gopī in adoration.

Balarāma

Balarāma, the elder brother of Kṛṣṇa, is also regarded as an *avatāra* of Śeṣanāga. The figure of Balarāma at Deopatan and datable to the

9. A. RAY, *Art of Nepal*, New Delhi, 1973, pl. 42.

15th century A.D., holds a pestle and a ploughshare in the upper hands and a disc in the lower ones. He is standing under the canopy of the serpent-hoods.

Kalki

Kalki is the tenth incarnation of Viṣṇu. A few images of Kalki have also been found in Nepal. In these, he is shown riding on a caparisoned horse with his right hand raised and carrying a double-edged sword and the left holding the reins. He wears a crown, usual ornaments and the lower garment.

Besides these, some other varieties of the images of Viṣṇu are also found in Nepal showing the wide popularity of his worship in ancient and mediaeval times.

Garuḍārūḍha Viṣṇu

Several types of Garuḍa-Nārāyaṇa images have been discovered from various sites in Nepal. In a rare type, the deity is seated in European fashion on his celestial *vāhana*, Garuḍa, having stretched wings forming a sort of back-arch. He holds a disc and a club in his upper pair of arms and a citron and conch in the lower ones, placed on his knees. His bejewelled crown has a lion's face in centre in the front as also shown in a similar Pāla sculpture of the god now exhibited in the Cleveland Museum of Art. It belongs to the 9th century A.D. It is *in situ* at Changunarayana.

There is another icon of Viṣṇu in the Hanumanghat temple at Bhaktapur, where the three-faced and ten-armed deity is standing with his feet placed on two Garuḍas. He holds in his right hands a lotus, a disc, an arrow, a sword, and in the left a shield, a bow, a mace and conch. His front right hand is in *varada-mudrā*, while the left is in *abhaya*-pose. This image appears to be a product of 18th century A.D.

Viṣṇu as Śrīdhara

Among the various form of Viṣṇu, his Śrīdhara form was quite popular and several images of the deity chiselled in this form have been discovered in Nepal. The four-armed image of Viṣṇu at Changunarayana holds a disc and a mace in the rear hands. His lower right hand is in *varada-mudrā* and the corresponding left carries a conch. He is flanked by his consort on the right, holding a full-blown lotus in her left hand, and the winged Garuḍa on the left with his hands joined in *añjali-mudrā*. The image is an excellent example of the 9th century A.D.

Sarvatobhadra

A rare Sarvatobhadra image of Viṣṇu is *in situ* in one of the niches of the Kumbheśvara tank at Patan. His arms bifurcated at the shoulders

carry a citron, a disc, a club, and a conch¹⁰. The deity is flanked by his consort on the right holding the stalk of a lotus in her left hand and winged Garuḍa on the left. This fine piece belongs to the 10th century A.D.

Yogāsana

Mediaeval images of Viṣṇu as Yogāsana have been found at Abaneri, Dindwana, Mathura and other places in India. The image of the deity discovered at Sankhu (Nepal), not only carries a vase in his hands but is also shown seated on a *pūrṇa-ghaṭa*, from which flowers and creepers are issuing. This is a rare example of the 17th century A.D.

Viśvarūpa

The Viśvarūpa aspect of Lord Kṛṣṇa has been beautifully described in the eleventh canto of the *Bhagavadgītā*. Several images illustrating this aspect have been noticed both from India and Nepal. The wonderfully carved image of Viśvarūpa Viṣṇu assignable to the 9th century A.D., can be seen at Changunarayana. The multi-headed god stands gracefully in centre surrounded by numerous figures. The deity is ten-armed. He holds an axe, a disc, a conch, a mace, a shield and other attributes in his hands. In the lower panel, as suggested by Dr. P. Pal, is the representation of Ananta as an incarnation of Viṣṇu and symbolizing the nether regions, rather than Viṣṇu himself¹¹. A contemporary sculpture in Indian art depicting Viśvarūpa Viṣṇu can be seen at Kannauj.

The Boston Museum, has recently acquired a gild copper image of Viśvarūpa Viṣṇu standing in *samapāda-sthānaka*-pose on a block pedestal. Unlike the other images of the deity, he has only one face and his ten hands carry various attributes like a disc, a sword, an axe, a goad, a shield, a mace, a conch, etc. The image datable to the 9th century A.D. is one of the masterpieces of Nepalese metal sculpture¹².

Jalaśayana Viṣṇu

Images of Viṣṇu as Śeṣaśāyin are well known from Deogarh, Gaya, Neelkantha, Baijnath, Khajuraho etc. in India. In Nepal, there are at least two colossal sculptures in which Viṣṇu is shown lying in his eternal sleep on a couch composed of the coils of the great serpent Śeṣanāga. They are carved inside large ponds at Hanuman Dhoka (c. 600 A.D.; fig. 2) and at Budhanilakantha (c. 642 A.D.) and can safely be regarded as great masterpieces of Nepalese art.

10. A. LIPPE, *Viṣṇu's Conch in Nepal*, in OA (N.S.), VII, 3 (Autumn 1962), figures 2 and 3 on p. 118.

11. P. PAL, *Vaiṣṇava Art From Nepal in the Boston Museum*, in BMFA, LXV, n. 340 (1967), p. 50, fig. 8; P. R. SHARMA, *Viṣṇu in Viśvarūpa from Nepal*, in BDCRI, XXIV (1963-64), pp. 28-30.

12. P. PAL, *op. cit.*, p. 45, figs. 6 and 7.

Sīva

Sīva is one of the most commonly worshipped deities in Nepal and his blessing was sought by kings of almost all the dynasties. Among all the temples of Sīva, the shrine of Lord Paśupatinātha is supposed to be the oldest¹³. Herein the deity in form of a *Chaturmukha-līṅga*, carved out in black stone, is universally respected¹⁴.

Images of Sīva as Gaṅgādhara with Pārvatī on Kailāsa have been found in large numbers in the valley¹⁵. An exquisitely carved sculpture in the Kumbheśvara temple at Patan shows four-armed Sīva seated in *sukhāsana* with Pārvatī on a cushioned seat on the Kailāsa mountain (fig. 3). They are surrounded by Kārttikeya and other figures. Sīva's *vāhana*, the couchant Nandi-bull, is depicted near his right knee. In the centre above, four-armed Gaṅgā, is descending from the heaven with her lower hands held in *añjali-mudrā*. The pedestal shows from the right a flute player, a *gaṇa* having an *udara-mukha*, *nṛtya*-Gaṇapati, a *gaṇa* and the emaciated Bhrṅgī dancing, a lion-faced figure playing on a drum, and a cymbal player. The image on the stylistic grounds can be assigned to the 10th century A.D.

The lovely theme also found expression through the medium of metal, as is evident by the discovery of some very fine images of the mediaeval period, now preserved in different collections¹⁶.

Ekapāda Trimūrti

A four-armed image of Trimūrti is in the Sundari Chowk at Patan. He holds a cup, a trident, an axe, and his lower left hand is in *abhaya*-pose. In this image, four-armed Brahmā and Viṣṇu are shown projecting from his right and left sides respectively with their front hands joined in *añjali-mudrā*. Another, somewhat a similar image is preserved in the Kathmandu Museum. These images belong to the late mediaeval period¹⁷.

Virupākṣa

A colossal sculpture of three-eyed Virupākṣa-Sīva can be seen at Aryaghat in the Paśupatinātha area. According to legends, the sculpture, whose lower half portion is buried in the ground was fashioned in circa 6th century A.D.

13. Cf. D. L. SNELGROVE, *Shrines and Temples of Nepal*, in AA, VIII, I (1961), pp. 3-10 and fig.; *ibid.*, VIII, 2 (1962), pp. 93-120 and figs.

14. D. R. REGMI, *Mediaeval Nepal*, I, Calcutta, 1965, p. 557; N. R. BANERJEE, *Nepalese Architecture*, Delhi, 1980, pl. LXXI.

15. N. R. BANERJEE, *A Note on the Iconography of Umā-Maheśvara in Nepal*, in AN, I (October 1967), pp. 22 f. and plates.

16. P. PAL, *Umā-Maheśvara Theme in Nepali Sculpture*, in BMFA, LXVI, n. 345 (1968), pp. 85 f., figs. 1-6.

17. B. N. SHARMA, *Siva Icons of Nepal*, in «India's Contribution to World Thought and Culture», Madras (1970), p. 378, pl. 39.

Naṭarāja

Two sculptures of Śiva as Naṭarāja can be seen in the Sundari Chowk at Patan. The multi-armed god holding various attributes like an axe, a trident, a kettle-drum, a bow, a lotus, etc., is shown dancing on his *vāhana*, the Nandi-bull, as is also generally found in Pāla and Sena sculptures from eastern India¹⁸. They appear to belong to the 17th century A.D.

Bhairava

Bhairava images represent one of the terrific aspects of Śiva. Early images of this variety in Nepal are extremely rare. One inscribed image of Bhairava dated 827 N.S. (1707 A.D.) in the Darbar Square at Bhaktapur shows him standing with his feet placed on the backs of two nude male figures facing each other. He has a terrific countenance, round eyes and wears cobras in his ears, on arms and the feet, and has a garland of human skulls in the neck. The deity is twelve-armed and carries a cup, kettle-drum, bell, sword, *khaṭvāṅga*, *muṇḍa*, shield, etc., while his two hands are in the *abhaya*-pose. A small figure having the same appearance is shown on each side of the god.

Lakulīśa

Several interesting images of Lakulīśa have been found in Nepal. Among these, an image of the deity shows him seated cross-legged with raised knees. A *yoga-paṭṭa* is tied around his waist and the shins. The image datable to the 15th century A.D., can be seen at Deo Patan. Another image of the deity of the mediaeval period is kept in Police Station at Dharan. He wears a crown and other ornaments and holds a staff in his left hand. The *ūrdhva-retas* aspects is quite distinct in this piece¹⁹.

Śiva-Liṅga

Worship of Śiva in his phallic form was also quite popular in the valley. The *Ekamukha-liṅga* at Mṛgasthali datable to c. 500 A.D. has justly been regarded as the finest of all the *Śiva-liṅgas* in Nepal (fig. 4). Its calm and serene face, elaborate *jaṭā-mukuta* and the elongated ears reminds us of the Gupta *mukha-liṅgas* from Khoh in the Allahabad Museum and from Nachna-Kuthara in the National Museum, New Delhi.

The *Chaturmukha-liṅga* (14th century A.D.) in the famous Paśupati-nātha temple has most of the characteristics of the Gupta art and can be regarded as a prototype of the *Bhāraśiva-liṅga* at Nachna-Kuthara in Madhya Pradesh.

18. C. SIVARAMAMURTI, *Naṭarāja in Art, Thought and Literature*, New Delhi, 1974, pp. 298-306, figs. 171-74, 179-82.

19. J. L. SHARMA, *Varāṇakṣetra ra kehī anya sthala*, in AN, 4 (July 1968), p. 28, pl. II.

Sun

Sun or Sūrya, who is regarded as the most beneficent of all the gods, also had his devotees in Nepal. Numerous images of Sūrya have been found in the valley, which prove the extent of the wide popularity his worship.

It will be interesting to record that in Nepal, both north and south Indian traditions of fashioning the images of Sūrya, were prevalent. A sculpture of the god at Naksal shows him wearing an armour and the long boots, as we generally notice in the icons of the deity from north India (fig. 5). In contrast to it, a sculpture of Sūrya at Sangal shows him bare footed, as one may find in the sculptures from south India.

A beautiful bronze image of Sūrya shows him seated cross-legged on a chariot drawn by seven galloping horses. He wears a typical crown, usual ornaments and has an oval-shaped halo behind the head. The image belongs to c. 12th century A.D. and is now deposited in the National Museum, New Delhi.

Sakti

Since time immemorial, Śakti in one form or the other has been worshipped in Indian sub-continent. In Nepal also, she was venerated both in her benign and terrific aspects. The benign aspects of Śakti is best presented by a fine image of Pārvatī, now in the Kumbheśvara temple at Patan. Her right hand is in *varada-mudrā* and in the left she holds the stalk of a lotus (damaged). The nimbate figure wears a crown, usual ornaments and *sārī* secured with an elaborate girdle having a floral clasp in front. The image can be dated to the 10th century A.D.

Like India, in Nepal too, « Pārvatī performing penance » was a popular theme for the ancient artists. A magnificent sculpture from Naghaltole depicts Pārvatī in penance as Aparṇā²⁰.

The most terrific aspect of Śakti is Mahiṣāsuramardinī, in which she is represented as killing the buffalo demon, Mahiṣāsura. An image of *devī* in this form is preserved within the precincts of the Paśupati-nātha temple. The ten-armed *devī* is shown killing the demon in full-human form. The sculpture is an excellent example of early 14th century A.D.

There is a rare image of Mahiṣamardinī as Ugrachandī at Bhaktapur. The eighteen-armed goddess holds a sword, an arrow, a discus, a *vajra*, an *aṅkuśa*, a trident, a *ḍamaru*, and her one hand displays the *varada*-pose; while her left hands carry a shield, a bow, a small trident, a noose, a *khaṭvāṅga*, and one hand is in *abhaya-mudrā*. With one of her right hands, she is piercing a trident in the chest of the demon in full human form, emerging out from the severed body of the

20. N. R. BANERJEE, *Pārvatī's Penance as revealed by the Eloquent Stones of Nepal*, in AN, 2 (Jan. 1968), pp. 301-4, and figs.

buffalo, whose decapitated head is lying in front. Her two hands tightly hold the hair of the demon, who is taking out a sword with his right hand from the sheath held in the left. Her *vāhana*, the lion, is also attacking the demon from the front side. Besides her usual ornaments, she also wears a *muṇḍa-mālā* and a skull is depicted on her crown. A female attendant holding a sword and a shield stands on her either side. The image bears a dated inscription of 827 N.S. (1707 A.D.).

Sarasvatī

Images of Sarasvatī, the goddess of wisdom and fine arts, are also found represented on the temples of Nepal. The Indreśvara Mahādeva temple at Panauti has an image of the goddess seated in *lalitāsana* on a double lotus. She holds a rosary and a manuscript in her upper hands; her lower right hand placed on the knee is in *varada*-pose and the corresponding left is in *abhaya-mudrā*. It belongs to the 18th century A.D.

Gaṅgā and Yamunā

The depiction of Gaṅgā and Yamunā in Indian art can be traced back to the Gupta period; but in Nepal, their representation became popular, probably from the early mediaeval period. The beautiful sculptures of these personified river goddesses at Paśupatinātha, datable to the 10th century A.D., show all the characteristics of the Pāla art. The figures stand on their usual *vāhanas*, a crocodile and a tortoise respectively and they wear diaphanous *uttariya* and *sārī* in similar fashion as is shown in the famous image of Gaṅgā from Rajshahi²¹. Some other sculptures of Gaṅgā and Yamunā, assignable to the 17th century A.D., can be seen in Mulachowk at Patan.

Brahmā

Brahmā, the Creator of the universe, is the first god of the Hindu trinity. One of the earliest images of the god contemporary to the famous bronze icon from Mirpur Khas (Sind), now in the Karachi Museum, shows him as a two-armed figure carrying a rosary and a water-pot. The four-headed deity (fourth head is not visible) wears a crown on the central head which is quite similar to the crowns of the Viṣṇu images carved during the Gupta period in the Mathura region. The image datable to 500-550 A.D. may be seen at Chapagaon²². Another sculpture of the god carved in the round shows him wearing the *jaṭa*-

21. For Pāla influence on Nepalese art, see K. J. KHANDALAVALA, *Some Nepalese and Tibetan Bronzes in the Collection of Mr. R. S. Sethna, Bombay*, in *Mārg*, IV, i, pp. 24-5.

22. P. PAL, *The Arts of Nepal*, I (Sculpture), Leiden/Koln, 1974, fig. 11.

*mukuta*s with locks of hair trailing on the shoulders. The sculpture assignable to 8th century A.D. is at Deo Patan (fig. 6).

Gaṇeśa

A beautifully modelled image of Gaṇeśa from Banepa is shown seated on a seat of inter-twined coils of serpents over a lotus pedestal. He is four-armed. His right hand carries a radish and the left a bowl of sweets, on which the tip of his proboscis is placed. His two hands are held against the chest. It has been assigned to c. 1390 A.D.²³

Another four-faced and ten-armed sculpture of Gaṇapati is shown standing on two rats. He wears a *sarpa-hāra* and holds a tooth, a hammer, an axe, a goad, a noose, a trident, a skull, and a *modaka-pātra* at the tip of the trunk. His two hands are in *abhaya* and *varada*-poses. The image was found at Hanumanghat, Bhaktapur and belongs to the 18th century A.D.

Kārttikeya

A sculpture of Kārttikeya, the younger brother of Gaṇeśa, found at Gairidhara shows him standing and carrying a long spear in his left hand. A kneeling devotee is depicted on his either side. Though defaced, the image is a fine example of late 12th century A.D. The Kumbheśvara temple at Patan has a multi-headed and four-armed sculpture of Skanda-Kumāra (17th century A.D.) standing against his *vāhana*, the peacock Paravāṇī. He has a rosary and a spear in his upper hands, while his lower hands are in *abhaya* and *varada-mudrā*.

Hanumān

Images of Hanumān, the Monkey-God, are rare in Nepal. A standing image of Hanumān at Rapti Manauri shows him standing with his right foot placed on the ground and the left on the back of Laṅkā, as described in the *Sundara-kāṇḍa* of the *Rāmāyaṇa*. His right hand is raised above the head as if he has lifted a mountain, while the left is held near the chest. The sculpture is a fine example of the late 12th century A.D. Similar images in India have been recorded from Mathura and Khajuraho²⁴.

Indra

The worship of Indra also appears to have been quite popular in ancient Nepal. A beautiful image of the deity in bronze shows him seated

23. P. PAL, *Notes on Five Sculptures from Nepal*, in BMQ, XXIX, 1-2 (Winter 1964-65), p. 31, pl. XIV.

24. B. N. SHARMA, *Hanumān in Indian Art*, in JAS, Bombay (N.S.), 49-50-51, 1974-75-76 (1979), pp. 186-190.

at ease with his right hand held in *chin-mudrā* (index finger and thumb joined) and the left placed on the ground. He wears a bejewelled crown, elaborate jewellery and the lower garment. A horizontal eye is carved on his forehead. The image is a masterpiece of the 12th century A.D.²⁵. A wooden sculpture (17th century) in the National Museum, Kathmandu, illustrates Indra and his consort Sachi seated under trees on a cushion over two elephants.

Kāmadeva

Sculptures of Kāmadeva, the God of Love, have also been noticed in Nepal, where he is generally shown as holding a flag and a fish in his upper hands and an arrow and a bow in the lower ones. Rati is shown seated on his right thigh, with her right hand in *abhaya*-pose and carrying a cup in the left, which is held near the mouth of her consort. Priti sits on the left thigh of Kāmadeva and lovingly looks at him. They are shown seated amidst flowers. The sculpture can be seen in the Sundari Chowk at Patan.

Chandra

Images of Chandra are also found in Nepal. One such sculpture illustrates Chandra or the moon riding on a chariot drawn by seven geeses. A dwarfish figure holds the reins to control them. Chandra is standing and holding stalks of full-blown lotuses. An arrow-shooter is shown on either side of the deity. The image, now at Gokarna, belongs to the 18th century A.D.

Kubera

Kubera or the Lord of riches was also worshipped by the Newaris, for he is the bestower of wealth and happiness. Among the numerous sculptures of the deity, the one in the Kumbheśvara temple at Patan, shows him standing with one foot placed on a couchant horse and the other on a lotus. His right hand, which is held near the chest holds a citron, while the left carries a money bag in the sape of a mangoose vomiting jewels. The image of the protuberant-bellied divinity wearing a crown and ornaments, belong to the 17th century A.D.

Syncretistic images *Harihara*

Harihara images represent the harmonisation of two important sects of Hinduism, viz., Vaiṣṇavism and Śaivism. A finely carved sculpture of

25. S. KRAMRISCH, *Art of Nepal and Tibet*, in « Philadelphia Museum of Art Bulletin » (Spring 1960), fig. 2.

Harihara illustrates a four-armed deity holding an *akṣamālā* and a *triśūla* in his right hands and a *chakra* and a *śaṅkha* in the left. He wears a *jaṭā-mukuṭa* on the right half of his head. He is flanked by Pārvatī on his right and Lakṣmī on the left. The image found at Balaju is assignable to the 11th century A.D. Similar other sculptures can also be noticed at Naksal and Paśupati-nātha.

Hari-Hara-Pitāmaha

To these two members of trinity, namely, Viṣṇu and Śiva, the third, i.e., Brahmā is also sometimes added and such images are known as Hariharapitāmaha. The Kumbheśvara temple at Patan has an image, where the three gods are shown standing on lotuses under a decorated arch. Brahmā is standing on the right, holding a rosary and a manuscript in his upper pair of arms. His lower right hand is in *abhaya-mudrā* and the left carries a *kamaṇḍalu*. His *vāhana*, a swan, is depicted near his feet. Śiva stands in the centre. He holds clock-wise a rosary, a kettle-drum, a trident and a damaged object. He wears cobras in his ears, a *sarpa-yajñōpavīta*, and a tiger's skin as his lower garment. Two couchant bulls are shown near his feet facing opposite directions. Viṣṇu stands on extreme left and carries a lotus, a discus, a club, and a conch. He wears a bejewelled crown and ornaments. His mount, Garuḍa, is depicted near his feet. This beautiful and rare icon can be assigned to the 17th century A.D.

Sūrya flanked by Viṣṇu and Śiva

A unique image of Nepalese art shows Sūrya standing in the centre. He holds lotuses in his hands. Sūrya and his charioteer Aruṇa, who holds the reins of the seven horses, wear armours. One arrow-shooter is shown on his either side. He is flanked by Viṣṇu on right and Śiva on the left, who are holding their *āyudhas* in the usual manner. The image is placed in compound of the Kṛṣṇa temple at Panauti and is datable to the 13th century A.D.

Ardhanārīśvara

A lovely terracotta figure of Ardhanārīśvara-Śiva shows him standing with the right foot placed on the couchant Nandi-bull and the left on a lion. The upper right hand of the deity is damaged, the lower right holds a rosary and the corresponding left hand is placed on the thigh. The right-half of the head bears a *muṇḍa*, while the left-half is decked with flowers. He wears a cobra in the right ear and a lotus in the left. The deity is decked in *sarpa*-ornaments in the right-half and the quaint jewellery of the period in the left-half. His *antariya* consists of a *vyāghra-charma* on the right and a diaphanous *sārī* on the left. The image is *in situ* at Rani Pokhari, Kathmandu, and can be assigned to the 18th century A.D.

Besides this, several other sculptures of Viṣṇu as *ardhanārī* are also known in Nepal²⁶. An interesting example of this variety is housed in the Indreśvara Mahādeva temple at Panauti. The eight-armed deity holds a lotus, a club, a conch and a discus in his right hands, and a manuscript, a lotus, a mirror and a vase in the left. The image having a flaming border can be regarded as one of the finest examples of the Malla period, 16th century A.D.

An unique image of Hariṣaṅkarī, datable to the 18th century A.D., is preserved in the Art Gallery, Bhaktapur. He has three faces in front and one above the central face. The eight-armed deity, who is seated in *padmāsana*, holds a rosary and a *muṇḍa* in his right hands and a lotus in the left. The attributes held in other hands are damaged and lost. The image has all the features of a male figure on the right and that of a female on the left. No other such image is known to us from elsewhere.

It will be quite interesting to note that a good number of terracottas (17th century A.D.) discovered at Bhaktapur and now displayed in the Kathmandu Museum, illustrate a number of Hindu deities like Brahmā, Gaṇeśa, Mahālakṣmī, Chāmuṇḍā, Vaiṣṇavī, Vārāhī, Virabhadra, Nandīśvara, etc. Besides these, early sculptures of Yakṣa and Nāga were also found from Hadigaon and Naksal, respectively, which prove the popularity of their cults in ancient Nepal²⁷.

Thus, keeping the above in view, we can conclude in words of Dr. R. C. Majumdar, that « in language, literature, art, religion and social ideas, Nepal formed an integral part of India and was completely saturated with its culture. It had close political and social association with India, and had not developed that isolation which characterised it in later ages. It was a strong centre of both Brāhmaṇical and Buddhist religions; and in spite of strange vicissitudes of fortune, it has still retained vestige of its old Indian culture »²⁸.

26. P. PAL, *Composite Form of Vāsudeva and Lakṣmī*, in JASB, V, 3-4 (1963, pp. 73-9; D. BHATTACHARYA, *The Composite Image of Vāsudeva and Lakṣmī*, in *ibid.*, VIII, 4 (1966), pp. 261-66; B. N. SHARMA, *Pahārī Bronzes*, in « Arts of Himachal » (ed. by V. C. Ohri), Simla, 1975, p. 21, fig. 7.

27. N. R. BANERJEE and B. K. RIJAL, *Three Early Sculptures in Stone from the National Museum, Kathmandu*, in AN, 4 (July 1968), pp. 37-9, pls. V-VI.

28. R. C. MAJUMDAR, *The Classical Age*, Bombay, 1962, pp. 136-37.

I am very grateful to Dr. L. S. Bangdel, Chancellor, Royal Nepal Academy, Kathmandu, who kindly accompanied me to different places in Nepal and showed numerous interesting sculptures most of which have been referred to in this paper.

The article has been typed by Mr. R. K. Sharma.

Photographs are by the author.

ABBREVIATIONS

- AN Ancient Nepal (Journal of the Department of Archaeology), Kathmandu.
 BMFA Bulletin of Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.
 BMQ The British Museum Quarterly, London.

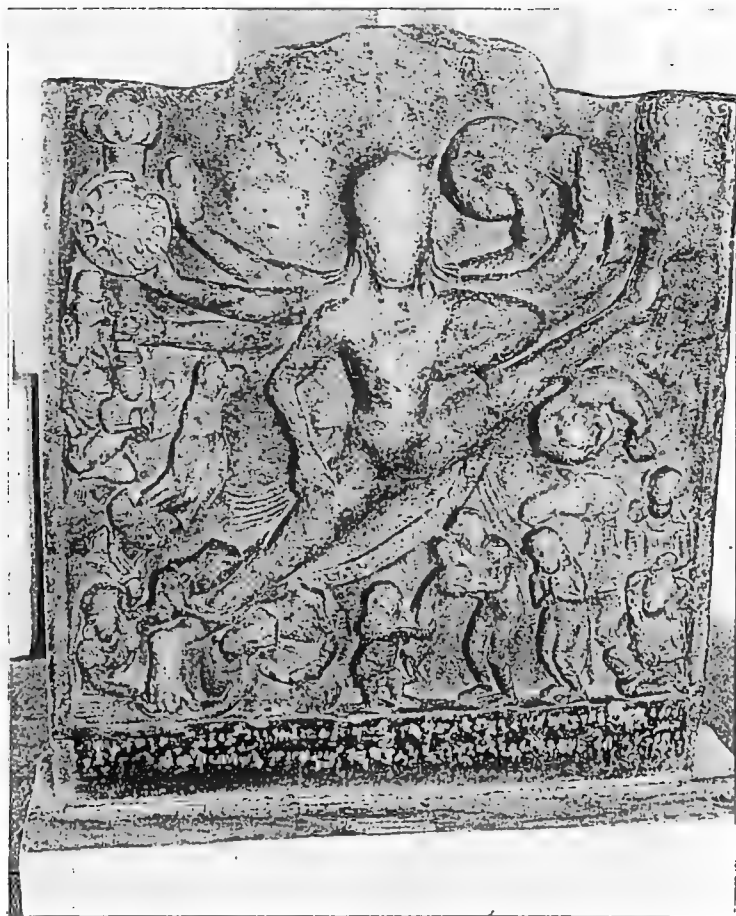


Fig. 1. Trivikrama, 476 A.D. Lajapat, Kathumandu, National Museum, Kathumandu.

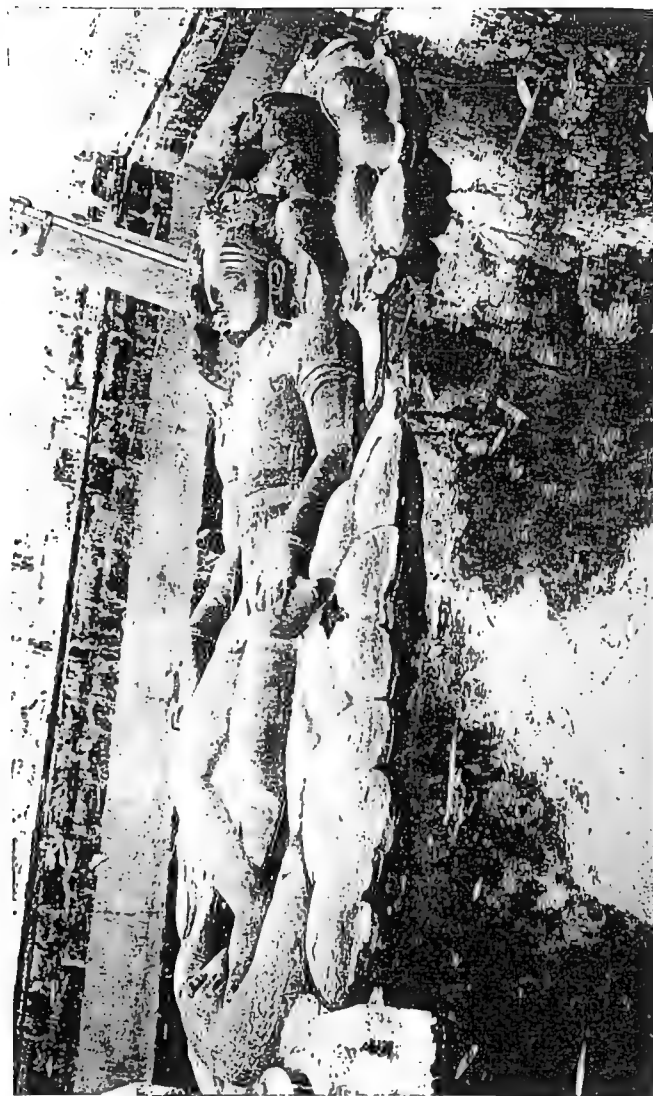


Fig. 2. Jalasayana Viṣṇu, c. 600 A.D. Hanuman Dhoka, Kathumandu.



Fig. 3. Gaṅgādhara, 10th cent. A.D. Patan.

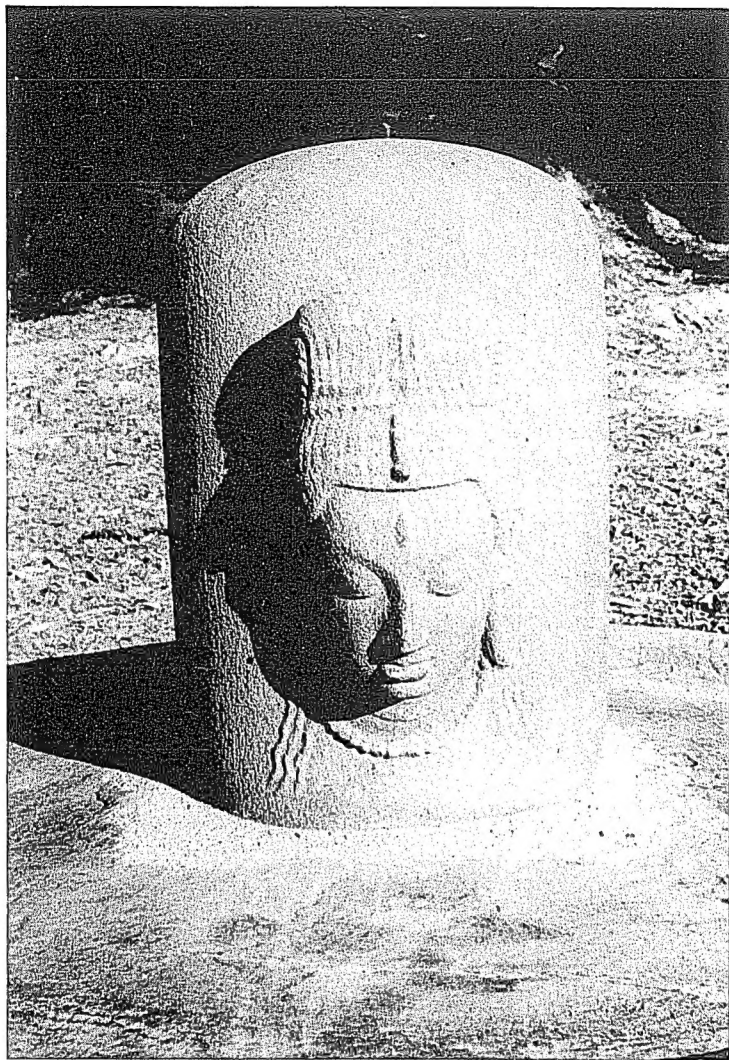


Fig. 4. Ekamukhalinga, 500 A.D. Mrgasthali.

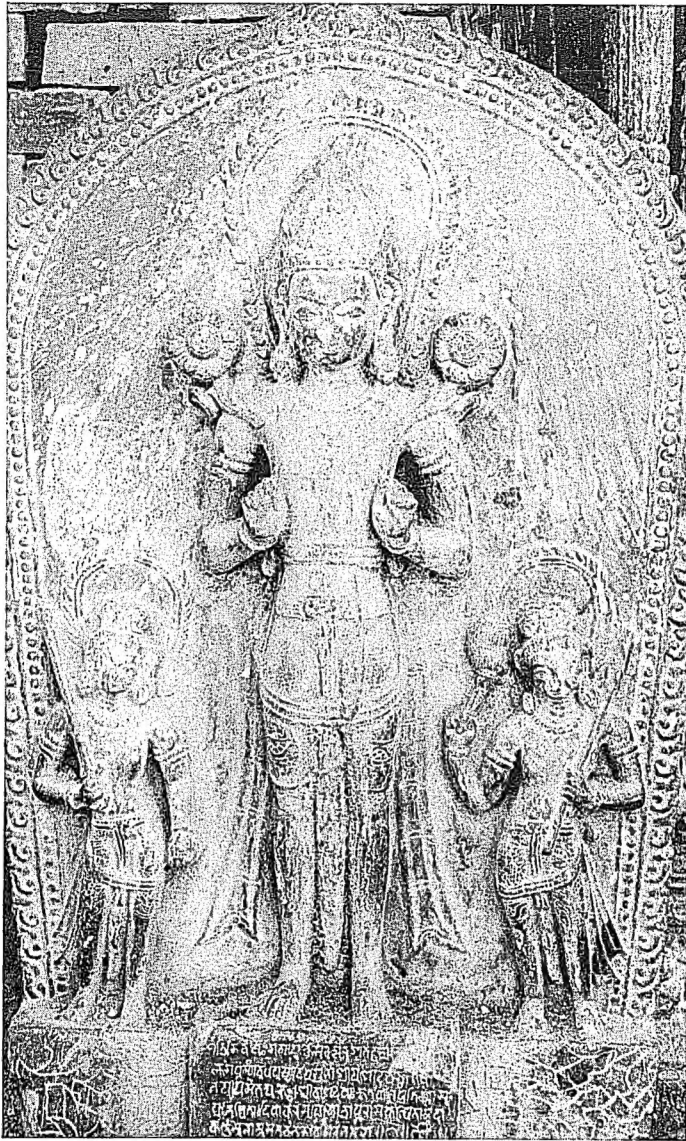


Fig. 5. Sūrya, 1083 A.D. Saugal, Patan.



Fig. 6. Brahṃā 7th-8th cent. A.D. Deo Patan.